



Digital Marketing - A curse or a boon for pharmaceuticals during the pandemic

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Abstract: Abstract : This research was conducted to know the impact of digital marketing in Pharmaceutical industries due to covid-19 and to analyze the attitude of consumers and sellers towards online marketing and reasonable impact that digital marketing has made with reference to the timespans of lockdowns and unlocks that the nation has gone through. It is also conducted to study the growth of the pharmaceutical industry with the help of Digital Marketing.

Keywords: digital marketing, Pharma industry, growth, covid.

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Introduction:

Ever since the outbreak of covid-19, there have been immense changes in different realms whether it be the basic lifestyle, livelihood or arena of work in different industries existing across the world. With the emergence of mutated variants, omicron in specific, and the predictions regarding various other mutations, the pandemic doesn't seem to come to an end anywhere in the near future. Imposition of covid protocols and norms have restricted our lifestyle in different ways but has also driven mankind to discover alternate solutions to continue its range of different occupations.

The cut-throat competition and overall market dynamics in the pharmaceutical industry are changing in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This clearly demonstrates the need of conducting a review study to explain the impact of digital

marketing in the pharmaceutical industry due to COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, it attempts to determine the effectiveness of using digital marketing, taking into consideration different business operations with respect to the pharmaceutical industry.

Objectives:

1. To know the impact of Digital Marketing in Pharmaceutical industries due to covid - 19.
2. To analyze the attitude of consumers towards purchasing drugs online.
3. To identify the problems faced by sellers switching to Digital Marketing.

4. Growth in the pharmaceutical industry with the help of Digital Marketing.
5. To study the awareness of Digital Marketing.

Hypotheses :

1. Digital marketing has helped the pharmaceutical industry in maintaining a minimum profit.
2. It has helped them in increasing their sales.
3. It has helped in following the safety guidelines during the pandemic.
4. Online websites have provided beneficial information regarding the usage, side effects, and dosage of the drugs.
5. It helps the industry expand business to a greater geographic segment.

Research Methodology:

Research Design : For this research project more structured and formal research design is used. The research design used is descriptive research design. Its objective is to provide a comprehensive and detailed observation of the phenomena under study.

Sampling Design : On the basis of representation, the sample can be divided into probability sampling or non-probability sampling. The research design is about Non- probability sampling techniques. Sample will be chosen from the users (both consumers and sellers) of e- pharmacy. In non-probability sampling, the researcher chooses the population for research at random. The method is not fixed. This makes it difficult for all elements of a population to have equal opportunities to be included in a sample. It is a time-convenient and cost effective method.

Sampling Area : Sampling is a statistical method used for collecting samples from a certain area. In this research, the sampling area selected is Patna, Bihar for both consumer and seller. Few of the specific locations for sellers are G.M.Road, Bailey Road, Boring Road, S.P.Verma Road. Patna, Bihar.

Sampling Size : Sample size in research can be considered as the number of participants taken into consideration for that specific research. The sample size in this research process is 130.

The sample size consists of 110 consumers and 20 sellers. They have been categorized under the age group 15 – 65. **Research Instrument :** Questionnaire is used for collection of primary data in the survey. For acquiring secondary data, books, magazines, newspapers, journals, and websites have been used as references.

Sources of Data :

Both primary and secondary data are used. Questionnaire is used for collecting primary data.

Newspapers, reference books, websites, and magazines are used for collection of secondary data.

Target Segment:

A researcher could consider a number of criteria for dividing a heterogeneous population into homogeneous groups. These include geographic, demographic, behavioral and psychographic segmentation. In this research geographic and demographic segmentation is used.

The geographical area in this research paper is Patna, Bihar.

The participants in this research work are bifurcated in different age groups and genders.

Limitations:

A limitation identifies potential weaknesses of the study.

The limitations faced while conducting the research are as follows:-

- Time constraints.
- The sample size of market research is **130**. There may be deviation in results from accurate results due to target segmentation. Larger sample size could have generated more accurate results. The importance of sample size is greater in quantitative studies compared to qualitative studies.
- Retailers were reluctant to share their private data.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data:

Interpretations of Consumer's Response

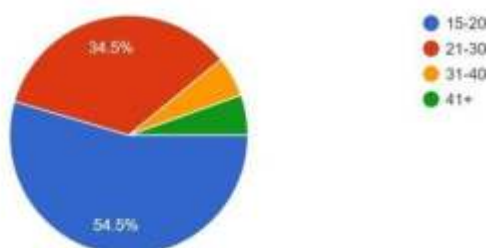
Question 1

Which age group do you belong to?

Options	Respondents	Percentage
15 - 20	60	54.50%
21 - 30	38	34.50%
31 - 40	6	5.50%
41+	6	5.50%

Age

110 responses



1. Availability of Internet during COVID-19 pandemic

Interpretation: Majority of the respondents are between the age group of 15-20.

Question 2

How do you order medicine?

Options	Respondents	Percentage
Buy From a store	52	47.70%
Buy Online	4	3.70%
Both	53	48.6%

How do you order medicine?

109 responses



Interpretation: Consumers prefer both buying online and from stores.

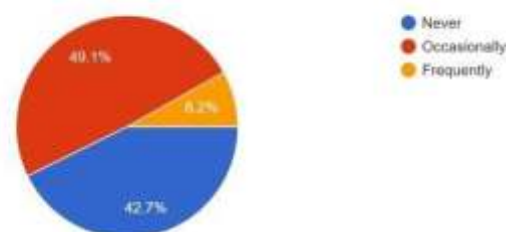
Question 3

How often did you purchase medicines online before the pandemic?

Options	Respondents	Percentage
Never	47	42.70%
Occasionally	54	49.10%
Frequently	9	8.20%

How often did you purchase medicines online before the pandemic?

110 responses



Interpretation: 8.2% of the total respondents bought medicines online before the pandemic.

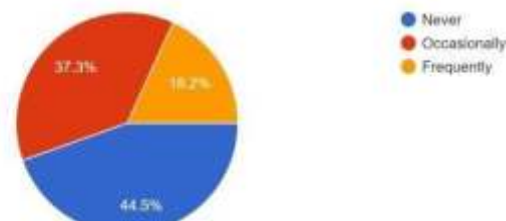
Question 4

How often did you purchase medicines online during the pandemic?

Options	Respondents	Percentage
Never	49	44.50%
Occasionally	41	37.30%
Frequently	20	18.20%

How often did you purchase medicines online during the pandemic?

110 responses

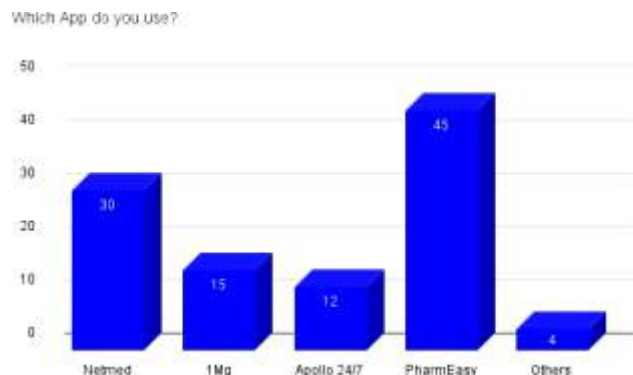


Interpretation: 18.2% of the respondents frequently purchase medicines online during pandemic, 37.3% of the respondents occasionally and 44.5% of the respondents never purchased medicines online during the pandemic.

Question 5

Which App do you use?

Options	Respondents	Percentage
Netmed	30	28.30%
1Mg	15	14.20%
Apollo 24/7	12	11.30%
PharmEasy	45	42.50%
Other	4	3.70%



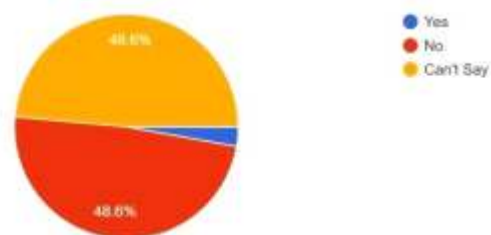
Interpretation: Most trusted app among our respondents is PharmEasy. There are various other apps used by the consumers.

Question 6

Were there any differences in the quality of drugs when purchased online?

Options	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	3	2.80%
No	52	48.60%
Can't Say	52	48.60%

Was there any difference in the quality of drugs when purchased online?
107 responses



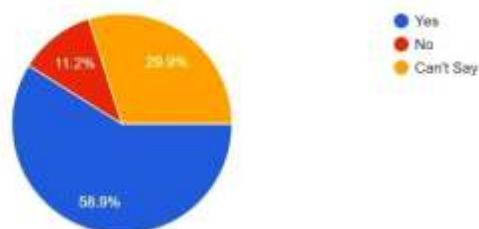
Interpretation: 48.6% of respondents do not find any difference in the quality of drugs when purchased online. 2.8% of respondents

Question 7

Was there any difference in the price of the drug when purchased online?

Options	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	63	58.90%
No	12	11.20%
Can't Say	32	29.90%

Was there any difference in the price of the drug when purchased online?
107 responses



Interpretation: 58.9% of the respondents found differences in the price of drugs when purchased online.

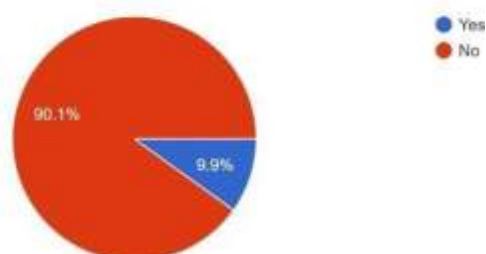
Question 8

Was it difficult to purchase medicines online?

Options	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	10	9.90%
No	91	90.10%

Was it difficult to purchase medicines online?

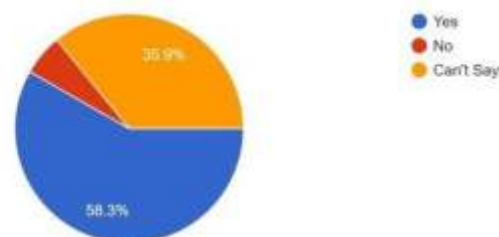
101 responses



Interpretation: Majority of the respondents found purchasing medicines online easy.

Were you satisfied purchasing the medicines online?

103 responses



Interpretation: Majority (58.3%) of the respondents were satisfied when purchasing medicines online.

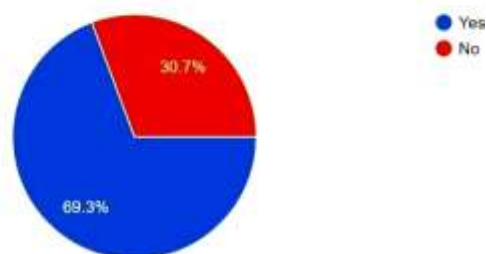
Question 9

Would you like to continue purchasing medicines online?

Options	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	70	69.30%
No	31	30.70%

Would you like to continue purchasing medicines online?

101 responses



Interpretation: 69.3% of the respondents would like to continue purchasing medicines online.

Question 10

Were you satisfied purchasing the medicines online?

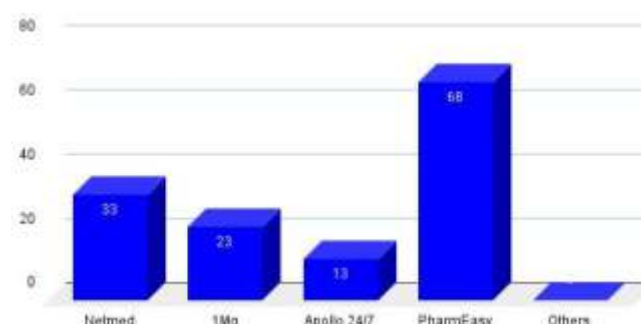
Options	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	60	58.30%
No	6	5.80%
Can't Say	37	35.90%

Question 11

Which application's advertisements do you see the most while using any social media platforms?

Options	Respondents	Percentage
Netmed	33	32.40%
1Mg	23	22.70%
Apollo 24/7	13	13.00%
PharmEasy	68	66.40%
Other	0	0%

Which applications advertisements do you see the most when using any social media platform?



Interpretation: PharmEasy invest more in advertisement when compared to Netmed, 1mg and Apollo 24/7.

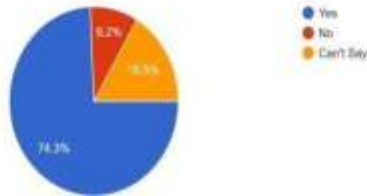
Question 12

Do you agree that digital marketing can provide an alternative marketing channel by eliminating the middleman?

Options	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	81	74.30%
No	10	9.20%
Can't Say	18	16.50%

Do you agree that digital marketing can provide an alternative marketing channel by eliminating the middleman?

109 responses



Interpretation: Majority of the respondents agreed that digital marketing can provide an alternative marketing channel by eliminating the middleman.

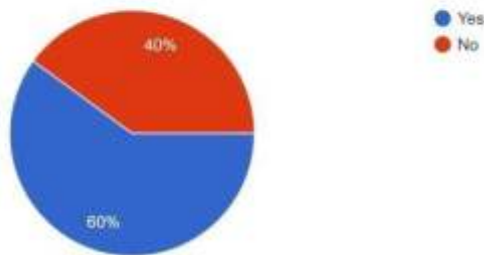
Interpretation of Seller's Responses

Question 1. Do you sell online?

Options	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	12	60%
No	8	40%

Do you sell online?

20 responses



Interpretation: Majority of local sellers sell online.

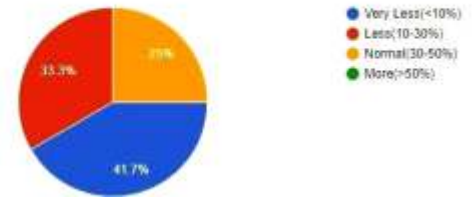
Question 2.

If yes, How much sales do you make online? (with reference to Q. 1)

Options	Respondents	Percentage
Very Less(<10%)	5	41.70%
Less(10-30%)	4	33.30%
Normal(30-50%)	3	25%
More(>50%)	0	0%

If yes, how much sales do you make online? (in reference to 4)

12 responses



Interpretation: Online sales is very less.

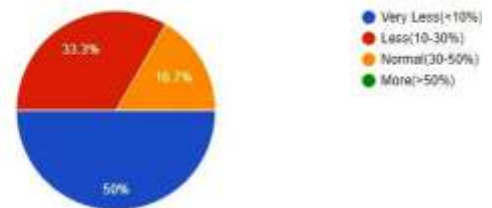
Question 3.

If yes, How much profit do you make online? (with reference to Q. 1)

Options	Respondents	Percentage
Very Less (<10%)	6	50.00%
Less (10-30%)	4	33.30%
Normal (30- 50%)	2	16.70%
More (>50%)	0	0%

If yes, how much profit do you make online? (in reference to 4)

12 responses



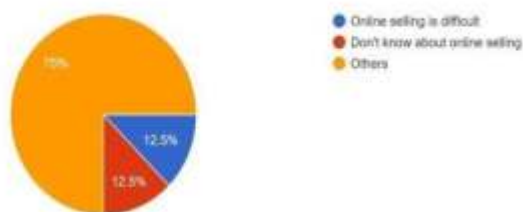
Interpretation: Local sellers can't make more than 10% profit.

Question 4.

If no, Why? (with reference to Q. 1)

Options	Respondents	Percent age
Online Selling is Difficult	1	12.50%
Don't Know About Online Selling	1	12.50%
Others	6	75%

If no, why? (in reference to 4)
8 responses



Interpretation:

Other reasons include:-

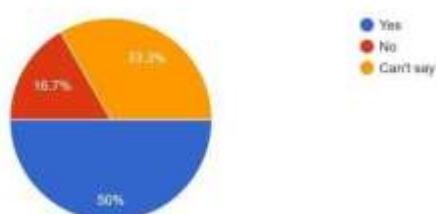
- They aren't ready to sell medicines at wholesale rate.
- Don't support online selling.
- Lack of time due to their stores.
- Haven't thought about starting online selling yet.
- Some are preparing to start online selling

Question 5.

Were there any differences in the level of demand for drugs when selling online?

Options	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	6	50.00%
No	2	16.70%
Can't Say	4	33.30%

Were there any differences in the level of demand for drugs when selling online?
12 responses



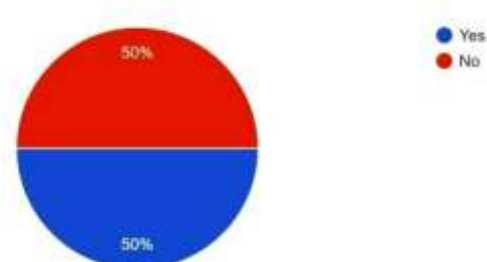
Interpretation: 50% of sellers found differences in the level of demand when selling online.

Question 6.

Do you advertise online?

Options	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	10	50.00%
No	10	50.00%

Do you advertise online?
20 responses



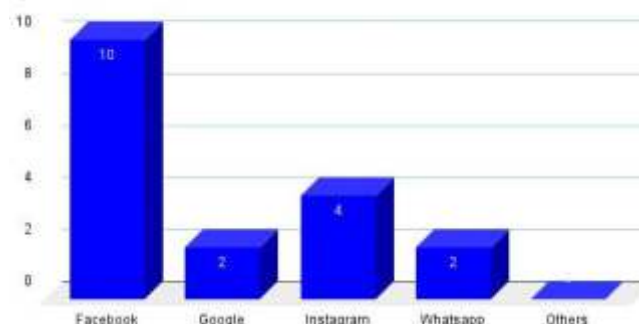
Interpretation: 50% of respondents advertise online and 50% of respondents don't.

Question 7.

If yes, which social media platform do you use? (with reference to Q. 6)

Options	Respondents	Percentage
Facebook	10	100%
Google	2	20%
Instagram	4	40%
Whatsapp	2	20%
Others	0	0%

If yes, which social media platform do you use? (in reference to 6)



Interpretation: FaceBook is the most used platform for advertisement.

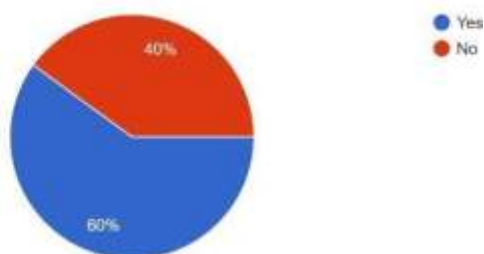
Question 8.

Would you like to mention the page name? (with reference to Q. 7)

Options	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	6	60.00%
No	4	40.00%

Would you like to mention the page name? (in reference to 10)

10 responses



Interpretation: 60% of the respondents shared their page name.

Question 9.

If yes, please mention the social media platform and the name of the page. (with reference to Q. 8)

Interpretation:

Name of some of the pages are:-

- Blue Medix
- Chemist Box
- Dawaking
- DrugPoint
- Nathani Drug House

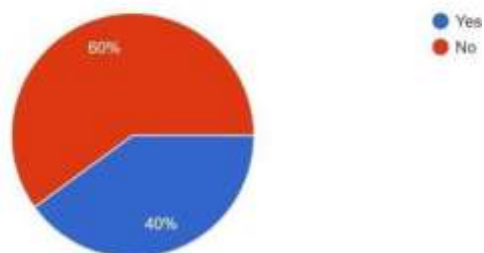
Question 10.

Do you use any website or application for marketing?

Options	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	8	60.00%
No	12	40.00%

Do you use any website or application for marketing?

20 responses



Interpretation: 60% of sellers don't use websites or applications for marketing.

Question 11.

If Yes, what media do you use? (with reference to Q. 10)

Interpretation:

Websites:-

- www.dawaking.com
- www.ndhpatna.com
- www.bluedmedix.in
- www.amazon.in
- www.chemistbox.in

Applications:-

- DawaKing
- Chemist Box
- Sasta Sundar
- 1MG

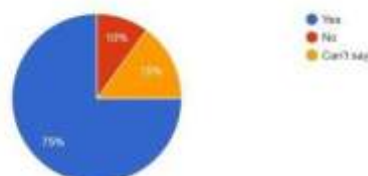
Question 12.

Do you agree that digital marketing as a commercial means has its advantages over the traditional commercial methods?

Options	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	15	75.00%
No	2	10.00%
Can't Say	3	15.00%

Do you agree that digital marketing as a commercial means has its advantages over the traditional commercial methods?

23 responses



Interpretation: 75% of the respondents feels that digital marketing as a commercial means has its advantages over the traditional commercial methods.

Question 13.

What were the problems faced by you while adapting to digital marketing over traditional marketing?

Interpretation:

The main problems faced are:-

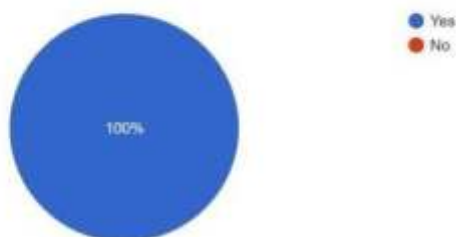
- Delivery charges aren't covered. Return or replacement issue
- Payment Methods used by consumers.
- Problems faced by small shop owners.
- There is a lack of information in online sites due to which customers are not fully satisfied. Consumers can face quality issue.
- Increased competition due to online selling.
- Have to sell medicines with very low or no profit margin.

Question 14.

Would you like to continue digital marketing even after the pandemic?

Options	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	14	100.00%
No	0	0%

Would you like to continue digital marketing even after the pandemic?
14 responses

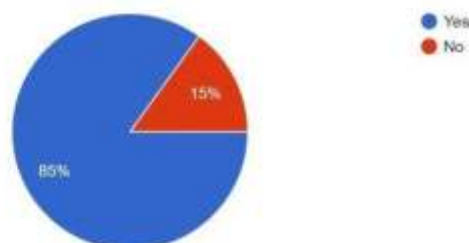


Interpretation: 100% of the respondents would continue digital marketing even after the pandemic.

Question 15. Were you satisfied with this new method of marketing?

Options	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	17	85.00%
No	3	15.00%

Were you satisfied with this new method of marketing?
20 responses



Interpretation: 85% of the respondents were satisfied with the new method of marketing.

Findings :

Consumers

- It was found that most of the consumers buy medicine both online as well as from retail stores.
- The Pharmaceutical industry was active in online selling even before the pandemic. It was observed that the frequency of purchasing medicines online increased from 8% before pandemic to 18% during pandemic. Therefore, there was an increase in 10% of online purchase.
- 45 of total respondents used PharmEasy, 30 NetMed, 15 1mg, 12 Apollo 24\7. It can be drawn that the majority of respondents have used PharmEasy and it is most trusted among other mentioned apps.
- 68 of total respondents have seen PharmEasy's ad, 33 Netmed, 23 1mg, and 13 APOLLO24\7. Hence, it is found that PharmEasy is the most popular among all the given options.
- Very few people found differences in the quality of medicines when purchased online, respondents preferred to buy medicines online than from stores during a pandemic.
- It was found that medicines are sold online at discount which gives buyers a reason to prefer online purchasing over local stores. Besides, there are no differences found in the quality of medicine online.
- Consumers found online purchasing easy and they were satisfied with this new method of purchasing medicines.
- Respondents believe that digital marketing can provide an alternative marketing channel by eliminating the middleman.
- It was found that advertisement helps to spread awareness among the consumers about the new purchasing method which enables them to buy medicines along with maintaining the covid-19 protocols.

- It was found that most of the consumers would like to continue with the online purchasing method in future as they are satisfied and it is an easy method when compared to traditional purchasing method.

Sellers

- It was found that many of the local sellers sell online but their sales and profit earned is very less as customers prefer popular applications like PharmEasy and there is high competition in online selling as many platforms offer medicines at discount price which is not possible for local sellers and can eliminate their profit earned.
- It was found that many sellers choose online advertisements to increase their sales. Most of them used facebook as their social media platform and only few of them have their own pages, websites and applications for advertisements and marketing.
- It was found that digital marketing as a commercial means has its advantages over the traditional commercial methods.
- Local sellers faced many problems while shifting from traditional to the new marketing methods. These problems are also the reason why many of the sellers don't want to choose a new method of selling over the traditional one. Some of them are:-
- Delivery charges and costs aren't covered.
- Payment Methods used by consumers.
- Return or replacement issue.
- There is a lack of information in online sites due to which customers are not fully satisfied.
- Increased competition due to online selling.
- Have to sell medicines with very low or no profit margin.
- Problems faced by small shop owners.
- Many consumers get duplicate medicines or can face quality issues.
- They aren't ready to sell medicines at wholesale rate.
- Don't support online selling.
- Lack of time due to their stores.

- Haven't thought about starting online selling yet.
- Some are preparing to start online selling.
- It was found that all of the local sellers would continue digital marketing even after the pandemic and most of them are satisfied with this new method.

Suggestions:

1. Consumers should be aware of new technology to keep pace with the changing marketing and sales pattern.
2. Consumers should follow Covid-19 protocols by adapting new methods of purchasing medicines.
3. Consumers should stay informed about various platforms of purchasing medicines and should check all the necessary information to avoid fraud.
4. Consumers should ensure that they are buying medicines from an appropriate and recognised platform.
5. Consumers should ensure safety of payment while paying online for medicines.
6. Sellers should be aware of relevant skills and technology required to keep pace with the changing marketing and sales pattern.
7. Local sellers should increase their engagement with customers to make profitable decisions and establish brand loyalty.
8. Online sites should try to provide proper dosage, safe methods and precautionary measures about medicines to the customers while selling online.
9. Sellers should ensure safety of delivery and secure payment. A proper payment and return policy should be formulated for smooth transactions.

Conclusion:

Digital marketing has spread awareness among the consumer through its different channels of advertisement regarding the online source to purchase medicines. This also includes different online pharmaceutical stores which tie up with local sellers to provide medicines online. Since they have home delivery services, it was easier for citizens to maintain covid- 19 related protocols and thereby ensure safety for everyone.

A business is an ongoing cycle and hence if it is stagnant, it may lead to its closure. Digital Marketing in this industry has helped to continue its business operation through advertising and online platforms to provide services.

Online medicine stores, websites and other similar applications help provide information regarding the dosage of the drug, its composition, efficacy, side effects and other information which could be a source of knowledge. This helps in imparting the basic education enough for a person to treat himself during mild sickness.

This marketing strategy is not limited to a certain geographic location. Since, advertisement through channels can be made to a global platform via the internet, it now targets a greater geographic segment. Also covers various age groups and gender.

The consumer behaviour was also analysed in this research. It was found that consumers were satisfied by the new method and they would like to continue with it.

As far as the sellers were concerned, they were able to secure the minimum profit which was at the risk of being incurred as loss. Yet, due to the whole system being digitised it was difficult for them to cope with. There were issues in payment and delivery. So, these applications were a little difficult for them to operate.

This research provides that the pharmaceutical industry as a whole has observed growth in the market. Apart from the growth and several life lessons learned, this has proved that our nation has a pool of talent that consist of doctors, researchers, and scientists, who have held the guard for us even in such devastating time.

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